That Manchester Heiress

By

MRS. LOVELL CAMERON.

"Just look back, Muriel, and see if there is not another bath chair coming."

It was certainly the fourth time the request had been made. Muriel turned her head obediently and looked. But the long espanade by the sea was nearly empty. It was out of the season, and it was the middle of a week. Brighton was comparatively a desert.

The sun beat down scorchingly overhead; the dazzling white houses on the farther side of the road seemed to blink in the heat, and to the south lay the sea, smooth and oily, and almost motionless in its breezeless silence.

Some nurses and citizens sat limply on the iron benches. A few strollers were dotted about. A ragged woman was trying to sell faded button-hole flowers from a basket on her arm to the infrequent passers-by; there was no one else.

"No, grandpapa, there is no bath chair in sight," said Muriel, wearily, in a voice that implied a total indifference as to whether there was one or no. As a matter of fact, she had not even the curiosity to inquire why her grandfather was anxious on the subject, or why a bath chair, other than his own, interested him so much this afternoon.

She was so tired and so hot! How she hated Brighton, and her life at the house of her crippled grandfather!

Every day she had to tramp out after that chair for hours—up and down, up and down the long asphalt walk, until sea and sky and town became blurred and confused before her eyes, and until her poor little tired feet ached and burnt.

"Tell the fool to stop!" cried out old Lord Learman, peremptorily. "I want to wait here. I am expecting a friend. I shall wait till she comes. Make him stop, Muriel. What an idiot the man is!"

Muriel had to catch hold of the chairman's arm and to bellow in his ear—he was very deaf, and nearly as old as his employer.

The chair was drawn up facing the sea, beside a bench. The man sauntered away to the iron railings, over which he hung idly, and Muriel Gray sat down by her grandfather on the bench.

Presently, far away along the hot asphalt walk, another bath chair loomed into the prospect.

"There is one coming now," said Muriel.

The old man's grim, yellow face relaxed into lines of satisfaction.

"Oh—h!" he ejaculated, with a sigh of relief. "She is coming, then! Look, child, who can you see in it?"

Muriel screwed up her eyes in the glare of the afternoon sun. "It looks like a very old woman, grandpapa."

"Very old, indeed! Why, Ellen Henson is younger than I am."

Muriel suppressed a smile. "Then she can't be old, I suppose," she remarked, drily. "Perhaps it is not your friend at all."

"Yes—yes. Of course, it must be she. Has she got white hair?"

"Yes—very white."

"And is there anyone with her, or is she by herself?"

"There is a gentleman walking by the side of the chair."

"Then he is with her!" remarked Lord Learman, half to himself; and the irritable lines about his brow and mouth softened, and the disagreeable old face grew almost gentle and tender.

The advancing bath chair drew nearer and nearer, and presently a shabby black parasol was frantically waved at the stationary chair.

Muriel began to experience a growing curiosity. What she saw was the dearest little old lady in the world, with wavy hair as white as snow, and with great melting brown eyes, that even now were as attractive as they were shrewd and keen.

"Ellen! Ellen!" cried her grandfather, tremulously, holding out two trembling hands. "I can't come forward to greet you, my dear—"

"Ah, my dear Learman," broke in the old lady's fuller voice. "After all these years we meet at last! My dear, dear fellow!"

Their hands reached out to one another, and clasped each other over the edges of their invalid chairs. After fifty years of separation the old lovers had met again.

Meanwhile, the two who stood by looked first at the old people and then at each other. Muriel saw that the gentleman who had walked by Mrs. Henson's bath chair was tall and slight and young. He had brown eyes like the old lady's and wavy hair that was dark and crisp, and his face was fresh and pleasant to look upon. No one introduced her to him, or him to her. The old people seemed to have only eyes for each other; they began to talk rapidly and excitedly to one another, and their talk was the talk of old people.

"Do you remember ——?"

"Have you forgotten ——?"

"Is he still alive?"

"What became of her?"

These were the questions that preluded their eager conversation, and all the time their hands remained firmly clasped together.

Insensibly the two witnesses of this meeting felt themselves to be left out of all this. There was no part nor place for them here. The young man's brown eyes twinkled; the girl's blue ones shot back a swift and wordless reply. The lad's lips half formed a question. The girl's dimpling cheek sent back a silent answer. In another moment they had moved quietly away together. A few paces took them safe out of earshot, with only the great blue vault of the sky above them, and the broad, glittering immensity of the sea before them. And when they were gone—quite gone—so that they could not possibly hear any longer, Mrs. Henson left off chattering to her old lover and nodded her pretty old head after them.

"They have gone, you see. There was no need for us to say a word."

"Have you said anything to him?"

"Not a word. All he has been told is that he must marry a girl with a great deal of money or else the old place will have to go to the jerrybuilder. He quite understands the necessity."

"You have not told him about Muriel, then?"

"He knows nothing whatever about her, not even her name. I told him that I was coming to Brighton in order to see a very old friend of mine whom I had not seen for years, and, of course, he came with me. Alan is a very good boy; he has always lived with me since his father died, and Henson Towers had to be let. My poor boy left nothing, you know. He ran through every penny—that racing stable—"

"Yes, yes, I know—I heard. It was a sad pity."

"Well, I don't know. He enjoyed his life, you know, up to the end. But, of course, it is rough on my poor grandson to be shut out of everything that he was born to."

"Well, luckily there is Muriel's money. My girl Sophy, as I wrote to you, made a mesalliance. She married, much against my wishes, a Manchester man, who died worth half a million of money. Sophy is a chronic invalid, and so Thomas Gray—a good enough fellow in his way—left the child to my guardianship. She spends half the year with me and half with her mother. When she is twenty-one she will come into her money. At present I keep her on a very small allowance, and she has no idea that she is an heiress. I have always put it clearly before her that I shall select a suitable husband for her myself, and I think she will be quite ready to obey me in the matter."

"Hum—yes—perhaps. All the same, we will not tell her that we want her to marry Alan," observed Mrs. Henson, thoughtfully. "My opinion is that young people are exactly like Irish pigs. If you want them to go in one direction you must drive them forcibly in another."

"Aha! that's very true. Well, but suppose they take a fancy to each other today?"

"Then we must oppose them tooth and nail."

"You always were a clever girl, Ellen," said the old man admiringly.

"And you always were a foolish boy, John," replied the old woman playfully.

Meanwhile the two young people were looking at the sea, or ostensibly doing so, whilst all the time they were stealing side glances at each other.

"How big and strong and handsome he is," thought the girl.

"How sweet and dainty and charming she is," thought the boy.

They were both rather shy; but though he was twenty-two and she only nineteen it was Muriel who found courage to start the conversation.

"How funny. They were so taken up with each other they never introduced us," she said, laughingly. "Here we are left to talk to each other and we don't even know one another's names or who we are."

"Well, we can put that right very soon," replied Alan. "I am Alan Henson, and I am Mrs. Henson's grandson—and you?"

"My name is Muriel Gray, and Lord Learman is my grandfather."

And they proceeded to make other interesting discoveries and confidences to to each other. Their fathers were both dead. They had no brothers and sisters. They had neither of they ever had much fun or pleasure in their lives. Alan lived with his grandmother in the little Dower House by the side of the big park in the north of England. That was his own, but it was let to strangers because he would never be rich enough to live in it himself, unless—but never mind that. Where did Miss Gray live? Did she ever have good times, and go to dances and picnics? But Muriel shook her head sadly. Her life was divided between two invalids—her mother, who had spine complaint and lay on the sofa all day, and her grandfather, who was a cripple with rheumatism. She had never been to dance or a party in her life.

"Ah, well," said Alan, "we are both rather unfortunate, I think, but I am worse off than you are." And then he told her the story of his impoverished acres. It had been decided that when the present tenants gave up the lease of Henson Towers, as they were going to do in a year's time, the place would have to be sold.

"And its such a lovely old place," he went on. "It has been for more than two hundred years in my family—a great grey stone house, surrounded by a moat, with ivy growing half over it, and beautiful carved chimneys, and a big gateway like a cathedral porch; and, oh, Miss Gray, such gardens! Long green walks and terraces, and old yews and mulberry trees, with borders always gay with dear old-fashioned flowers. And there is a ruined chapel at one side, and a great still lake covered with water-lilies at the other; and beyond there is the park, and an avenue of lime trees half a mile long. And such glades and woods! Such glorious oaks and chestnuts, and a hawthorn dell that is white with flowers and carpeted with bluebells in the early summer. You never saw such a beautiful park as Henson is!"

"I never saw such a park in my life," replied Muriel, earnestly. "My mother lives in London. My grandfather lives here at Brighton. I never seem to have seen anything else. Don't you love Henson Park very much?"

"Love it! I should think I do! I love every inch of it. I've known every tree and shrub in it all my life, for though it has been let since my father died, yet I have always been able to ramble over the place as I liked, and the Dower House, where granny lives, is inside the park. Just think what it would be to see it sold and cut up into building lots!" and Alan's eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

Muriel's eyes filled too out of sympathy. "Oh, but that would be dreadful!" she cried. "Can nothing be done? Can't you work and make some money?"

The boy shook his head. "Not enough, I am afraid. Besides, it would take years and years—till I was quite old—however hard I worked; and next year there are some mortgages to be paid off. Ah, you don't understand about that. But, anyhow, the lawyers say it must be sold to pay off these debts."

"And you can do—nothing? Nothing?"

The girl's eyes were full of a sweet compassion. Alan thought he had never received such a measure of divine pity in his life before. His brow grew dark with misery—a misery which he had often dimly foreseen but had never really understood before. The brooding shadow of his life took shape and substance now.

"Yes," he answered, in a stifled voice, "there is one thing that I can do—that I am told I must do—"

"And that one thing?"

"Is to marry a rich woman I don't love, so that I may save the home of my fathers."

There was a silence.

Muriel looked away across the sea.

"And," she said in a queer little hard voice, "you have made up your mind to do this one thing then—to—to sell yourself for money?"

"What am I to do?" he cried, vehemently. "They tell me that it is my duty, that I shall be a coward and a cur if I flinch from doing it, and besides, I love Henson so much—so much. Oh, can't you understand?"

For the moment it seemed as though her opinion, her comprehension, her forgiveness even were of more value to him than anything. He bent forward to see her face, but Muriel's head was turned away. She seemed to be intently watching a little brown-sailed fishing smack that lay half a mile away on the glassy surface of the sea. The sun caught the brown sail as the smack moved and turned it into a beautiful golden yellow. Then the shadow fell again, and behold it was nothing more lovely than a dirty brown! Alan thought it was like an allegory of his own life.

"Tell me, I entreat you," he pleaded, "tell me that you don't utterly despise me."

But she told him nothing of the sort, and he knew that she did despise him.

"I am thinking of that poor girl," she said presently. "That girl whom you don't love, but whom you are going to marry only because she is rich. I pity that poor girl from the bottom of my heart."

Alan looked at her quickly. Her face was set and hard. Her eyes looked cold and angry. He laughed a little nervously.

"Oh, but there is no girl for you to pity—not yet at least. I don't know who she is. Granny or the lawyers are going to find me one—some Liverpool or Manchester heiress. I am told there are several who would be glad to have Henson Towers. It's a beautiful place, you know."

Muriel laughed outright, and somehow all the hardness went out of her face. "Oh, but now you are really funny!" she cried, merrily. "If that girl is not found yet, don't let us think about her! Be happy now. A year is a long way off. Who knows what may happen between now and next year!"

"I believe you are right," answered Alan, more cheerfully. "I am sure I am glad enough to forget it. Shall we walk on a little? Our grandparents seem quite happy, don't they? Did you know that they were once engaged to be married when they were young?"

"No, really? Oh, do tell me about it! How very interesting. Why were they not married then?"

"Oh, the usual thing. No money; parents and guardians intervened and parted them, and each married somebody else."

"And their lives were spoilt probably," said the girl, thoughtfully.

"Yes; that is what parents and guardians enjoy, I believe—spoiling the lives of those who are to come after them."

"You speak very bitterly, Mr. Henson."

"I feel very bitterly, Miss Gray. So would you if you knew it was your duty to marry a fat, vulgar Manchester heiress!"

"Ah, now you are ridiculous! Why should she be either fat or vulgar? Some Manchester people, surely, are neither. Do you know, my father was a Manchester man."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said Alan, reddening.

"You need not. I do not remember him, for he died when I was three years old, but my mother has a portrait of him. He was quite slight and very nice looking."

"He must have been if he was your father," said the young man, rather lamely.

"That does not follow; but I told you to show you that all Manchester people are not offensive; and if you could love that poor rich girl who has got to be your wife, then it will be all right. You must try and love her."

Alan looked at his companion for a moment in silence. The sun lit up her fair face and shone straight into her lovely eyes. He had never seen anyone like her before, she was so charming, as well as so pretty, and so sympathetic; and he was sure that she was good.

"I can't love her," he said, slowly. "I am quite sure I can't; so it would be no use my trying, would it?"

"Oh, but why can't you?"

"I know that I love someone else."

"Oh—h! Then that alters the case entirely," replied Muriel, and her color rose a little and her eyes fell. "And the someone else it poor, probably?"

"I neither know nor care," cried the boy, impetuously. "I only know that I never saw anyone like her before, and that she is of more value to me than a score of heiresses! I have met my queen—the only girl in the world I could ever love—only, of course, I may not love her!"

"They are calling us. Let us go back!" broke in Muriel, and she turned quickly round toward the bath chairs. Neither spoke another word until they reached their grandparents.

They came back with rather red faces and with averted eyes, and as they approached Lord Learman muttered to his companion:

"They haven't hit it off. They are not speaking to each other; they look as if they had quarreled."

"I don't think so," replied the old lady, with a twinkle in her eyes. And no doubt ladies understand these things better than gentlemen do.

Mrs. Henson and her grandson remained at Brighton for a week. Every day the two old people met in their bath chairs on the Parade, and every day the two young ones sauntered away together. Three times did the old lady and Alan dine with Lord Learman in the gloomy house in a side street where he had settled down to live out the remainder of his life, and on these occasions Muriel, by her grandfather's special desire, dressed herself in a pretty, low white evening dress and wore her mother's pearls round her slender throat, looking, it is needless to say, infinitely charming in this costume. Alan Henson fell more in love with her than ever.

After dinner they found that the far corner by the piano in the back drawing room was a most interesting place to remain in; and Muriel sang old ballads, whilst Alan chimed in in the chorus, and sometimes for long intervals the music ceased altogether and their subdued voices filled up the moments with murmured mutual confidences; for the glamor of love's young dream was over them both, and the minutes sped by on golden wings.

The last day came. The shadow of parting was over them both. Mrs. Hensen and Alan were going back to their home in the north country, and two days later Muriel was to return to her mother's house in South Kensington.

He loved her, but he had not dared to tell her so. The shadow that lay over his whole life could not be lifted. He felt that he ought never to see her again. But he told his grandmother he had fallen in love with Muriel Gray.

Mrs. Henson threw up her hands in pretended dismay. "My dear boy, what a calamity! And you have told her so?"

"No, no, granny. I may be a fool, but I hope I am a gentleman. I know that I cannot marry her, and so I have not been so dishonorable as to make love to her. I know quite well what my duty is, and I mean to do it. When I say good-bye to Muriel to-night it must be forever and ever, but she will never know that may heart is broken."

"Good, brave boy!" said his grandmother, patting him on the shoulder. "Turn your back upon temptation, Alan, and do your duty. Then heaven's blessing will rest upon you."

And for the first time in his life Alan shook off her hand impatiently and flounced himself out of the room.

The old lady chuckled to herself.

"He has fallen in love with her," she said to Lord Learman that evening, "but he is determined to bid her an eternal farewell."

"Bless my soul!" But that's very bad, Ellen."

"On the contrary, it's very good."

"He will go away and forget her."

"Not he. He would, no doubt, if the course of true love ran smoothly, but when it doesn't a man never forgets."

"No, that's true enough, Ellen," and the old man put out his hand and grasped the old woman's. "I never forgot you, I know, and I was miserable after I married poor Blanche."

"Well, I don't mean my boy to be miserable. He has got to marry money, no doubt, but if he can love the woman who has got it, he will be happy, and love comes first. Let those contradict that assertion who dare."

Meanwhile, at the other end of the room, a great and ever increasing sadness brooded.

Muriel could not sing, Alan could not talk. All the little jokes fell flat. They could neither of them laugh. Her slender fingers wandered vaguely over the ivory keys, but somehow they fell into a minor key, and a little plaintive undercurrent of melody skimmed like a shadow through their words and looks.

"Will he give up that woman for my sake?" thought Muriel.

"Will she think me a brute if I go away without speaking?" thought Alan, and their looks met in an agony of doubt and of embarrassment.

As the evening drew to a close, Muriel, but for womanly pride, would have been in tears; and although her pride sustained her outwardly it made her appear rather cold and distant, so that Alan said to himself: "After all she does not love me. It is only I who suffer."

And all the time Muriel was saying to herself: "If he would only just say once 'I love you!' then I would let him go and never trouble him again. I could live on those three words forever."

But he never said them.

At the last their parting was very demure and quiet. They were both pale, and their hands were cold as ice.

"Good-bye!" he said. "You have been very kind to me."

"Have I?" she answered, absently. "I didn't mean to be," and perhaps he understood the enigmatical words.

"Come along, Alan. Our fly has been waiting half an hour," crief Mrs. Henson, and the young people moved forward side by side into the front room. If their feet were like lead, their hearts were heavier still.

The Hensons were leaving early the next morning. Just as they reached the door Alan said suddenly to Muriel: "I wish you could see Henson Towers, then you would understand."

"So she shall see it!" cried Mrs. Henson, briskly. "I promise you that, Muriel. You shall see Henson some day."

But Alan shook his head sadly, and in another moment the formal good-byes were over, and the door had closed upon the departing guests.

A month went by. Thirty-one weary, lagging days that dragged themselves slowly and laboriously away. Muriel had gone back to her mother's in London. It was now August, and the weather was heavy and sultry. Mrs. Gray never left home. There was no autumn outing for her daughter. Muriel could not possibly want change, she argued, not unreasonably, after six months of such beautiful bracing air as Brighton. Perhaps she was right, but London in August is very quiet and dull, and Muriel told herself that it was owing to the season of the year that she felt so depressed and out of spirits. The distant South Kensington square was scarcely a cheerful place. Mrs. Gray's jointure was small. She was a feckless, extravagant woman, who had ever been in the habit of letting her money dribble away uselessly, and her husband had realized this fact and had not left her the wherewithal to fritter away his hard-earned gains.

His daughter's large fortune was very much tied up in the hands of trustees, so that it could not be touched till Muriel was twenty-one. Moreover, one of the conditions of Mrs. Gray's quarterly payments was that her daughter should be kept in ignorance of the inheritance until her twentieth birthday. That would leave her a year to settle what she would do with it when she got it, Mr. Gray had thought. Mrs. Gray lived simply enough, with two maids. She was a constant invalid and never entertained; her doctor was now her chief solace in life. It was a dull home for a bright young thing like Muriel, certainly, but she had never found herself quite so miserable in it as she was now.

Up in Westmorland Alan was scarcely more happy, although he had many more distractions than she had. There was the trout stream to begin with, and there was some black game to be shot upon the moors. The tenants were abroad, so he could wander as he chose about his own property. But Alan did not enjoy himself as much as usual. The trout did not rise as they ought to do. He shot badly and missed his birds. The beautiful park nestling under the round-topped hills seemed less delightful to him than of old. Was it all worth it after all? he began to ask himself. Was anything in the whole world worth Muriel and the chance of her love? He began to waver in his determination. There was no hurry. The rich woman was not found. He himself was not going to move a finger in the matter. He had told his grandmother so and he had told the lawyers. If a sufficiently wealthy lady willing to be his wife were brought to him he would do his duty and propose to her. More than that was not to be expected of him. Well, they had not found any lady yet. Perhaps she was not to be found. He should not be altogether sorry if she never were found, only in that case he supposed Henson would be sold under his very eyes. It would be bad, very bad, but would it not perhaps be worse if he were divided from Muriel forever?

Then one day the blow fell.

One morning at breakfast Mrs. Henson looked up from her letters and spoke.

"My dear Alan, a lady is coming to stay here very soon, who will, I think, answer the purpose we have in view."

"You mean," he gasped, "a—rich lady?"

"Her fortune is ample."

"Does she know what you have asked her here for?"

"Not exactly. It would not be quite decent to tell her, would it?"

"Perhaps she may not accept my offer," said the boy after a few minutes in a low voice. He had walked away to the window and stood looking out of it gloomily. The beautiful park and its fine clumps of trees, of which a wide sweep was visible from his grandmother's little house, appeared to him suddenly to be ugly and hateful. Never had the broad acres of his inheritance seemed less lovely in his eyes. "Perhaps she may refuse me," he said again.

"Let us hope not," replied his grandmother, cheerfully. She smiled and nodded at him and appeared to be in the best of spirits. "It is your business to see that she accepts you, Alan. You are young, good looking and by no means a fool. You can make yourself acceptable to her if you choose. It is your duty to do so."

"Very well, don't let us talk about it. I am going to do my duty, as you know. What is the girl—or woman—like? Is she even young? Is she vulgar or very plain? Have you seen her?"

"Yes, I have seen her. She is young and not at all unpresentable. More than that I had rather not say. It would not be fair to prejudice your mind beforehand."

"Ah, then, I quite understand," cried Alan, bitterly. "But it doesn't really matter in the least, does it, what she is like? When one marries a woman from the most sordid motives it's best to make no pretense about anything else; besides which, if my heart is irrevocably given to another woman, it does not signify in the least what she is like—only, for the sake of my friends, I trust she will at least pass muster for a lady."

"She will do that, certainly," said Mrs. Henson, quietly.

Alan made as though he were about to leave the room.

"Wait. Don't go yet. I have another little bit of news to give you—not so important as the first, but still it may interest you."

"Yes?"

"Muriel Gray is coming to stay with us to-day."

"What!" he shouted out, and his face flushed and his eyes shot fire. "Muriel! What for—why?"

Mrs. Henson laughed. "Do you object? Shall I send a telegram to stop her coming? There would be just time to put her off."

"No—no! Of course not!" he gasped. "But why now, when this other is coming? They cannot be here together."

"No, that is just why. They won't be here together certainly. And don't you remember I promised Muriel that she should see Henson Towers? I thought she had better come first—before the other, you know. Will you not be glad to see her?"

"Glad! I should think so! But, oh, granny, this is a fearful temptation for me—the trial will be a hard one."

"Not at all. I am quite sure you will be equal to it. You always do put duty first, my dear boy; and you have so firmly and bravely made your decision that I am certain you can be trusted to do what is right."

Nothing more was said, and Muriel Gray arrived that night.

There followed two beautiful golden August days. Alan and Muriel wandered together all over the park. They took their lunch out and ate it by the trout stream under the willows; then they took out a tea basket and discussed its contents high up on the hills, with the house lying in the valley below them. As the tenants were away, Alan was able to take Muriel inside the house and to show her all the family portraits and the old furniture. All day long they were together—and granny pretended not to notice. Yet, though they were so happy, and so taken up with one another, not one word of love passed Alan's lips during the whole of those two long summer days. Only he spoke often of Henson, and of his love and his duty to the home and his ancestors, and Muriel answered quietly and sadly that she understood it was his duty to sacrifice himself. The third day came, and Alan did not know, whilst Murial had utterly forgotten, that it was her twentieth birthday. But Mrs. Henson both knew and remembered it.

After breakfast she called her grandson to her into the morning room.

"I have news for you, Alan. The Manchester heiress will be here to-day."

He turned very pale, but said nothing.

"I ought, I think, to tell Muriel," continued the old lady; "in fact, I have decided to do so."

"No, no!" cried Alan, in a chocked voice. "I implore, I entreat you not to tell her," and then suddenly he fell on his knees by her chair and buried his face in the folds of her dress. "Oh, granny, granny!" he broke out, lifting a white and haggard face to hers. "It's no use, I cannot do it! I have striven and struggled to do my duty, but it is impossible! I can't marry this woman whilst my whole heart belongs to Muriel, and she—my darling—loves me. That is what makes it impossible."

"You have asked her, then, if she loves you?"

"No, I have not spoken a word; I have been tongue-tied. But I know that she loves me by her sweet, shy looks, by her changing color, by her soft, hushed voice, by a thousand things by which a man can always guess that a maiden loves him. Oh, granny, you must know, or have you forgotten?"

"No, my dear, I have not forgotten, though I am an old woman. Well, what is to be done?"

"I don't know. But I think you had better send that Manchester woman away. Can't you wire to her not to come?"

"Not very well. I think you will have to see her, Alan."

"But I can't marry her. In fact, I won't marry her!" he cried, springing to his feet and beginning to pace up and down the room. "Henson will have to go to the hammer. I am going to marry Muriel Gray."

Mrs. Henson sat silently smiling to herself for a few minutes, whilst Alan, all his youthful, boyish submision gone, continued to pace with manlike vigor up and down the tiny room.

"Go and bring Muriel here," said the old lady at last.

"Here? Now? What for? he queried, quickly. "I—I rather want to talk to her myself, granny, just now."

"Do me the kindness of postponing your talk with her until after I have seen her, my dear boy. I won't keep her five minutes."

"What do you want to say to her?

"Never mind. But you shall hear. You may be present at our interview, if you like. Go and fetch her; and, on your honor, say no word of love to her until after I release her. Promise, Alan."

He promised, and went away to find the girl.

A few miutes later they came back together, Muriel looking a little puzzled and anxious.

"I know what it is," she had said to Alan. "That girl is to come here, and the spare room will be wanted for her. Is that not it?"

But Alan did not answer her; only she saw that his face was full of trouble.

Mrs. Henson's first words to Muriel were a surprise to them both.

"Muriel, my dear, it is your birthday, is it not?"

"Why, so it is! I declare I had forgotten it!" she answered, laughing.

"Come and kiss me, my love, and let me wish you many happy returns of the day! You are twenty to-day, are you not?"

"Yes, Mrs. Henson." Granny held her by the hand.

"I have a birthday offering for you, my dear child. An 'offering,' you know, means a thing that is offered. You can take it or leave it, as you like."

The young people looked at one another doubtfully.

"Here is my grandson, Alan Henson, who tells me that he has lost his heart to you—"

"Oh, Mrs. Henson!"

"Well, now, I offer him to you as a husband. Don't snatch your hand away, Muriel, and don't you look so foolish, Alan. My dear children, you love each other, and love comes first. Money is a very good thing, but it's not everything in this world."

And here Alan chimed in: "My grandmother is quite right, Muriel. Money is not everything. It is, in fact, nothing—where love is concerned. And I love you with my whole heart, and have made up my mind to marry you if you will have me, darling—and—and Henson Towers may go to the dogs!" And then and there Alan took her into his arms, and they clung to one another, she hiding her crimson face against his breast.

"Well, at any rate, Muriel," remarked granny, dryly, "you can never say Alan married you for your money!"

"For my money! What do you mean, Mrs. Henson?"

"Why, she has no money, granny."

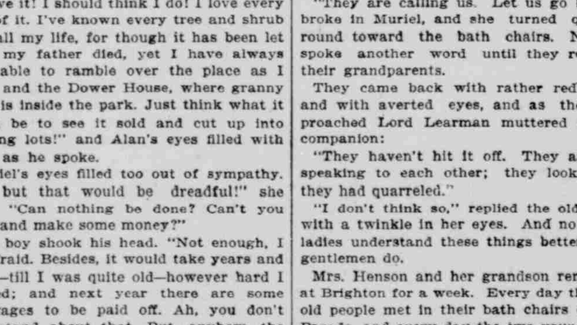
"I am not so sure about that. There has been a secret kept from you all your life, Muriel. But on your twentieth birthday your father wished you to be told. You are twenty to-day, and Lord Learman, your guardian, has deputed to me the pleasant task of telling you. Your father died a very rich man, my dear child, and you are his heiress. In a year's time you will be one of the richest young women in England."

"Granny, is this true? How wonderful!"—and by some queer instinct Alan suddenly took his arm from the girl's waist and stood away from her, looking at her doubtfully and almost with consternation.

Muriel was pale and her lips trembled. "But I don't understand, Mrs. Henson; if I am so rich that I can marry Alan, as, of course, I am certainly going to do, where was the need of that other girl? You need surely not have sent for that Manchester heiress."

"My dear, you are the Manchester heiress," said granny, smiling. "We planned it all—your grandfather and I; we are the culprits. You see, we wanted Alan to marry you for yourself, and not for your money. And I think you will admit that our little plot has been thoroughly successful. Now, go away together and do your love making, my dear children."

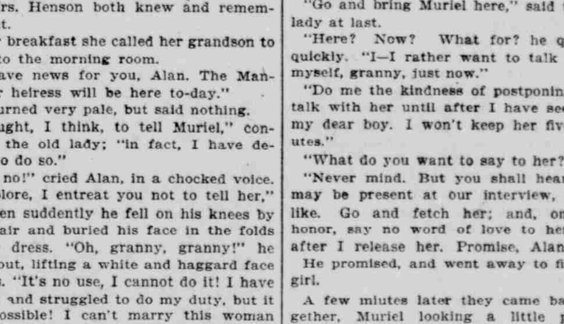
[Copyright, 1902.]



NOT GUILTY.

First Hobo (in surprise)—You look mighty queer, Frosty. Have you taken a bath?

Second Hobo (ditto)—Why, no. Is there one missing?



Mamma—Well, Charles, I'll forgive you this time; and its very pretty of you to write a letter saying you are sorry.

Charles—Yes, ma; but don't tear it up please.

Mamma—Why, Charles?

Charles—Because it will do for the next time.

SPHINX LORE

Enigmatic Knots of Odd and Ingenious Kind for the Leisure Hour.

[Any communication intended for this department should be addressed to E. R. Chadbourn, Lewiston, Maine.]

145.—REBUS.

A familiar quotation from "The Anatomy of Melancholy." ROBERT.

146.—DELETION.

And now 'tis June—dear June, as Lowell says,
And then he says lots more about it,
THREE, like the bobolinks, his heart-felt praise
So WHOLEs him that he needs must shout it!

Ah, June! you can be pretty if you try,
With blushing flowers, the meadow-lark's sweet TWO,
The fresh south wind that greets the passer-by,
The fragrant valley and the sparkling dew.

And yet, of late we cannot well forget
That lots of June days are extremely wet.

KAPPA KAPPA.

147.—ENIGMAS.

—Some Favorite Books.—

1. A well-known literary man has his workroom upholstered and hung with red. "It's my favorite story in modern fiction," he explains enigmatically to friends who are admitted to his sanctum. 2. "Did the baby give you any trouble?" his mother asked Tommy, who had taken charge of his small brother all the afternoon. "No," said Tommy, "the baby slept most of the time, and, of course, I enjoyed that. It's the jolliest book I know; must read it again!" 3. The little maid had built her sand castle and now she was getting spoils from the ocean to decorate it with. Every wave laid its treasures of pearly shells and delicate seaflowers at her bare brown feet, and soon her basket was quite full. "Baker's famous old tale, eh?" said an old gentleman, peeping in it, as she passed. "How I loved that book when I was a boy!"

MABEL P.

148.—CHARADE.

The old church tower COMPLETES the town,
The town COMPLETES the sea;
To ALL some papers I sat down;
My maid TWOed PRIMAL me.
I turned around and caught my maid;
"You are dismissed," I cried;
"O! please COMPLETE my fault," she said.
"No! leave me," I replied.

The old church tower COMPLETES the town,
The town COMPLETES the sea;
I watched the blue waves with a frown;
My conscience troubled me.
The blue waves, dacing, seemed to say,
"COMPLETE, COMPLETE, forgive!"
I did—her grateful TWO that day
Will help me while I live. E. E. C.

149.—A WOODSMAN'S PROBLEM.

Jack and I have always been great chums. This is not surprising, seeing that the families to which we belong are the only settlers within a radius of at least five miles. Our fathers are general farmers and both make a special hobby of apiculture. Jack's home is at the northeast corner of a block of land a mile and a quarter square, while ours is at the opposite southwest corner. On my last birthday Jack came through the bush to our place to bring me a birthday gift and to see what other presents I had got. One of these was Fenimore Cooper's story "Oak Openings," and we were both soon deeply interested in the first chapter, which describes the hero's method of locating a bee's nest. "Say we try it," suddenly suggested Jack. I agreed, and having procured a glass tumbler and a piece of honeycomb, we set out to find some wild honey by putting to practical test the method described. We commenced operations at a spot a quarter of a mile west and a quarter of a mile north from home. Having caught a bee by placing the tumbler over it we set the glass over the honeycomb, and soon the bee loaded itself with honey. We then took away the glass, for we knew that the bee would be eager to return to its home with its precious load of honey. After rising and circling round over the honeycomb it made a dart away on a "bee-line" for its home. My eye could not follow it, but we set out in the direction in which Jack claimed it had gone. By catching other bees we found that Jack was right. We proceeded until, approaching the woods, we thought we must be near the nest. We were now half a mile east and three-quarters of a mile north from home. In order to "make the angle" that our hero had spoken of, we left our bee-line and went due east for a quarter of a mile and again sent a bee home. This one flew off into the woods in a direction exactly northeast, leaving Jack to follow it, I returned to the first line; and now we began to taste in anticipation the wild honey which is said to be so much finer than domestic honey. All that was to be done was for each to follow a bee-line; we must then meet at the hive of the bees. But there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, and I will presently tell you why, although we found the bees, we failed to secure any wild honey. But, on second thoughts, the reader may determine this for himself by drawing a plan of our homes and of our operations. F. L. S.

150.—REVERSAL.

"I don't know why they named me FIRST,"
She said. "I have no gift of soaring;
I cannot sing; I am not versed
In art of building or of boring.
To turn it round, it seems like some
Strange degradation of one's selty,
To find it suddenly become
A most abhorrent Hindu deity.

M. C. S.

151.—COMBINATIONS.

A	2
B	10
K	9
X	8
U	4

Combine either two or four of the above letters and numerals, using an equal number of both in each word, so as to read phonetically as follows: 1. In the fore part of a vessel. 2. Kind. 3. Prior to. 4. Threshed. 5. Having the nature or qualities of a dog. 6. Lessen. NOTLIH.

152.—NUMERICAL.

The sailor loves the boundless deep,
And smiles to see the wild waves leap
LIke children sporting merrily,
He welcomes every passing sail,
And watches for salute or hail
4-5-6 out at 1-2-3.

2-4-5-6 with pure delight
He sees the stars come out at night—
Lone ships in heaven's immensity—
While the horizon's 5 to 9
Grows smaller as they brighter shine
4-5-6 out at 1-2-3.

Oh! Nature, all thy works are grand!
And tollers, both on waves and land,
May feast admiring eyes on thee;
But 1 to 9 men best uphold
Thy grandeur, as their course they hold
4-5-6 out at 1-2-3. E. E. C.

PRIZE WINNER.

The successful solver of No. 123 is Leatha M. Paddock, Terre Haute, Ind.

Other excellent lists of authors are acknowledged from Mrs. F. G. Hackleman, Norah M. Stebbins, R. A. Noyes, Miss F. A. Case, Frank Loring, P. E. Ransome, M. H. K., Mrs. Cora McCarty, G. D. Douglass, Fernie, Winona Newsom, E. G. Stearns, Mary E. Badger, M. Alice Dodge, Helen A. Pratt, Eugenie, Roscoe Lund, Mary Walker, E. H. P., Nannie J. Nason, Mrs. Farnham, Mrs. Kate Schooley, Ida N. Watkins, R. H. Allinson, Peter Knowles, Mabel Ellerton.

ANSWERS.

129—Trenton, New Jersey.
130—High-born.
131—1. Grouse. 2. Pewit. 3. Woodpecker. 4. Curlew. 5. Bluebird. 6. Pelican. 7. Pheasant. 8. Oriole.
132—Sang, sing, song, sung.
133—1. DaN. 2. Ar-nO. 3. No-vI. 4. Dan-iEL. 5. EvE. 6. Lay-arD. 7. Is-pa-haN. 8. Os-sA. 9. Nov-go-roD.
134—Mislay, islay, slay, lay, ay.
135—9 and 8 altars; 81 and 64 yearly sacrifices.
136—Duties, suited.

A Little Girl's Compliment.

Kansas City Journal.

Two women and a bright little girl occupied seats in a Prospect-avenue car last evening. The little girl attracted attention with her questions and answers. It was when the car reached Eighteenth street that the climax was reached. At that point the car makes a long stop before pulling up the hill. It was while the car was at a standstill that a pretty woman, and evidently a friend of the two in the car, passed along.

"Oh, dear! There's Mrs. S— My! She is such a handsome woman," said the mother of the bright little girl to her friend.

"Yes. She is beautiful," assented the friend.

The little girl was looking out of the window after the figure strolling up the hill. Presently she turned in her seat.

"Say, mamma; you look just like that lady."

"Do I, dear?" asked the mother sweetly.

"Yes. Just 'zactly—all 'cept the head."

The little girl is still wondering why the carful of people laughed.